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M: EVALUATION FACTORS FOR AWARD**M.1 GENERAL EVALUATION INFORMATION**

Careful, full and impartial consideration will be given to offers received pursuant to this solicitation. Only Offerors which demonstrate acceptable submission to the Government of all items included in Section L of this solicitation (or amendments thereof) will be considered for award. This includes:

- Submitting a proposal that meets all minimum requirements.
- Submitting a proposal that complies with all requirements of law, regulation, and conditions set forth in the solicitation.
- Submitting a proposal that meets all technical requirements and specifications of the solicitation.

In evaluating all areas of an Offeror's proposal, the Government may consider risk. Risk may affect the Summary Rating of the Technical and Past Performance proposals.

A Glossary of Terms used in this document can be found in Section C, Appendix D of this Request For Proposal (RFP).

M.1.1 Minimum Requirements

Proposals that fail to meet any of the Requirements cited in Section C will be considered unacceptable.

M.1.2 Competitive Range

The Contracting Officer will make the determination as to which offers are in the "Competitive Range." The Competitive Range shall be comprised of all the most highly-rated proposals unless the range is further reduced for purposes of efficiency pursuant to FAR 15.306(c) (2). All Offerors in the competitive range will be invited to participate in the live test demonstration (LTD). The initial number of offers considered as being within the competitive range may be reduced when, as a result of the written or oral discussions, or LTD, an offer has been determined to no longer have a reasonable chance of being selected for award. Offerors that do not have an adequate facilities proposal will not be in the competitive range.

M.1.3 Discussion/ Final Proposal Revision

All Offerors selected to participate in discussions will be advised of deficiencies, serious weaknesses, and other aspects whose remedying might materially enhance their proposal, as well as negative comments concerning past performance. Offerors will be presented a reasonable opportunity to revise price and technical parts of their proposal accordingly and to address unfavorable reports of past performance. A final common cut-off date

which allows a reasonable opportunity for submission of written responses to discussion issues shall be established, and those Offerors remaining in the competitive range will be notified to submit a final proposal revision.

M.1.4 Responsibility

An offeror must be determined responsible according to the standards in FAR Subpart 9.1, RESPONSIBLE PROSPECTIVE CONTRACTORS

M.1.5 Evaluation of Options

Optional Periods of Performance

The following factors will be utilized in evaluating the proposed options. Evaluation of options will not obligate the Government to exercise any of the options

- One-year extension of Base Period, maintenance and related support services. The factors used to evaluate this option are the price and the strategy used to transition the HPCS into the follow-on system.
- Optional four year extension of the Base Contract Period, known as the “Option Contract Period”. The Option Contract Period will continue to provide the computational and associated resources necessary to support continued advances in environmental modeling capabilities and other high-performance computing system requirements that may arise within NOAA and at other partner agencies. Offerors must assume that overall system dependability and balance among the HPCS components will be maintained, within the confines of the funding profile, during the option periods. The Option Contract Period will be evaluated based only upon the system performance level guarantees.
- One-year extension of Option Period, maintenance and related support services. The factors used to evaluate this option are the price and the strategy used to transition the HPCS into the follow-on system.
- Additional R&D HPCS Augmentations: These additional augmentations could be used to satisfy unanticipated NOAA requirements or requirements from a partnering agency.
- Engineering Support: The factors used to evaluate this option are price, credibility, and recruitment strategies.

M.2 EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

To be acceptable and eligible for evaluation, proposals must be prepared in accordance with, and comply with, the instructions given in this solicitation document and must meet the specifications and requirements set forth in Section C. Proposals meeting the minimum requirements and complying with the provisions of the Standard Form of Contract will be evaluated in accordance with the procedures described herein and award

made to the responsible Offeror whose proposal is determined to be the most advantageous to the Government.

All proposals will be evaluated based on the technical, past performance, price factors, and facilities described in this section. Proposals will be evaluated with a view toward the award of the contract presenting the most favorable offer to the Government, therefore, proposals must contain such information as may be required to conduct a detailed and thorough evaluation.

The Offeror's proposal must give clear, detailed information sufficient to enable evaluation based on the major factors and subfactors listed below.

Major factors considered in the evaluation of offers are as follows:

- **Technical:** This factor will receive a narrative description and will be rated higher than Past Performance and Price. **For all Offerors in the competitive range, the Live Test Demonstration will affect the rating of this factor.**
- **Past Performance:** The Offeror's proposal will receive a rating based on documented information regarding such factors as quality, timeliness, customer satisfaction, cost control and business practices that the Offeror has demonstrated on projects of a similar scope and nature in the past.
- **Cost/Price:** The cost/price proposal will be evaluated for magnitude and realism. Price factors will also be used as a further indication of the Offeror's understanding of the scope of the requirement. Total Life Cycle Costs to the Government, both direct and indirect, will be evaluated.
- **Facilities:** The facilities proposed to house the HPCS will receive a narrative description. A site visit by the Government to all offered non-Government-owned facilities will be required as part of, or in addition to, the Live Test Demonstration.

M.2.1 Basis for Award

The contract awarded as a result of this Request for Proposals (RFP) will be an integrated assessment by the Contracting Officer of the results of the evaluation based on the evaluation factors and their relative order of importance as indicated below.

Ultimately, the source selection decision will take into account the Contractor's capability to meet the requirements of this solicitation on a timely and cost-effective basis. The Government reserves such right of flexibility in making the source selection to assure placement of a contract in the Government's best interest in accordance with the evaluation criteria.

Accordingly, the Government may award any resulting contract to other than the lowest-priced Offeror, or other than the Offeror with the highest technical merit.

M.2.2 Degree of Relative Importance Assigned to Major Evaluation Factors and Subfactors

The Technical factor will be weighted significantly more than Past Performance. The combination of the Technical factor and Past Performance will be paramount with respect to Price.

M.3 TECHNICAL

The following technical components will be used to evaluate the technical proposals and are all very important to the Government. The Government will conduct its evaluation by developing a list of strengths and weaknesses. They are of roughly equal importance.

- Computing
- Storage and Archiving
- System-wide Components

M.3.1 [Computing](#)

Factors used to evaluate the LSC are, in order of decreasing importance:

- Performance
- Reliability, Availability, and Support
- User Experience
- Capacity

Items used to evaluate Performance may include, but are not limited to, the System Life Throughput offered on the initial system, the [workstream](#) benchmark performance offered on the initial system, the results of the benchmark scaling study, and the performance increment offered on upgrades during the base contract period. Based on information provided by the Contractor, the Government will evaluate proposals in order to verify that workstream performance is appropriate to their funding profile.

Items used to evaluate Reliability, Availability, and Support may include, but are not limited to, the availability level offered in the initial system, the capability of the failover hardware and software, the available features in the resource management [software](#), batch queuing and scheduling [software](#), load balancing [software](#), and checkpointing software, the capability to operate and be repaired in degraded mode and offered training.

Items used to evaluate User Experience may include, but are not limited to, the completeness and usability of the offered OS, programming environment, standard user interfaces, and COTS software, the availability of community supported software, the available features in the resource management, accounting, batch queuing and scheduling, activity monitoring, and checkpointing software and security features.

Items used to evaluate capacity may include, but are not limited to, the memory per processor, the disk space per node, the total memory and disk, the bandwidth of the node interconnect, and the capacity of the interactive resources and the bandwidth to them.

M.3.2 Storage and Archiving

Factors used to evaluate Storage and Archiving are, in order of decreasing importance:

- Performance
- Reliability, Availability, and Support
- Capacity
- Communications with the Operational Central Computing System (OCCS) and its Backup System
- User Experience

Items used to evaluate Performance include, but are not limited to, the archive benchmark performance, aggregate sustained transfer rate of individual devices, file positioning rate, aggregate tape positioning rate for nearline tapes, the robotic tape library performance and the performance of the user and operator interfaces to the data migration software.

Items used to evaluate Reliability, Availability, and Support may include, but are not limited to, the capability of the failover software, capabilities for operation and repair and degraded mode, backup capabilities, the ability to operate in the absence of the LSC, the reliability of the robotic tape library, the reliability of the nearline and offline media, and the offered data recovery service.

Items used to evaluate capacity of the Hierarchical Storage Management System (HSMS) include, but are not limited to, the capacity of the nearline and offline tiers in the data archive, the number of individual devices, residency time on disk cache, total bandwidth between nearline and online tiers in the HSMS, its expansion capability and data transfer rates.

Items used to evaluate capacity of other storage components including the Fast Scratch file system may include, but are not limited to, the capability of fault-tolerance, data storage capacity, the number of individual devices, how often data needs to be removed from staging areas, total bandwidth, its expansion capability and data transfer rates.

Items used to evaluate the communications with the Operational Central Computing System (OCCS) include, but are not limited to, the ability to write data generated from the OCCS to the R&D HSMS that supports workstreams 4-9, the ability of the Backup System to read from and write to the R&D HSMS that supports workstreams 4-6, and any communications link necessary to support Workstream 4-6 and the Primary and Backup OCCS dataflows to and from the HSMS. Note that the Primary and Backup OCCS HSMS data interfaces may be implemented at *either* Fairmont, WV or Gaithersburg, MD since operational data are mirrored at both sites.

Items used to evaluate the User Experience include, but are not limited to, the functionality and usability of the user and operator interfaces to the data migration software, including the ability to send files from tape directly to different destinations over the network and for users to group related files and directories on a single tape volume, the ability of the HSMS software to provide automatic migration between data

archive tiers, and the plan for accessing the legacy archive as well as the backup and recovery features for system data files.

M.3.3 System-wide Components

Factors used to evaluate the system-wide components are, in order of decreasing importance:

- Balanced performance and capacity between the HPCS subsystems
- Security
- Support Services
- Adaptability and Flexibility

As discussed in Section C.1, balance implies that the capacity and performance of the LSC, HSMS, Home File System (HFS) and their interconnection allows efficient use of the HPCS resources, in part by minimizing bottlenecks to the flow of information (as represented by the benchmarks) between the components of the HPCS throughout its life. The subfactors used to evaluate balance may include, but are not limited to, the individual capacities of the HPCS components, the bandwidth between HPCS components and to model and observational data, the reliability of the network providing model and observational data, and the cluster software used to manage the various resources of the HPCS.

Items used to evaluate the security of the system include, but are not limited to, the durability and integrity of security access components (hardware and software devices), providing a secure remote access, logging of user access, and adherence to all applicable government IT security regulations and procedures.

Items used to evaluate Support Services may include, but are not limited to, the plan offered to move toward the “One NOAA” vision, the quality of the Offeror’s maintenance plan, management plan, transition plan (including the costs, if any, of loss of performance during the transition), change management plan, failure escalation procedure, capable personnel staffing, training and documentation and user assistance.

Items used to evaluate Adaptability and Flexibility include, but are not limited to, the ease of code portability and maintenance, minimal performance loss by running on other than the target LSC architecture, easy and reliable access to data for any user and minimal variability in user environments.

M.4 PAST PERFORMANCE

This factor will be rated based on the information and opinions gained by contacting the references listed in the proposal, firms with which the Offeror has a history of past performance, and possibly other customers known to the Government and others who may have useful and relevant information. The Government reserves the right not to contact all references provided and to contact other references even though not provided by the Offeror.

The following subfactors will be considered (all subfactors are of equal importance):

- Quality of products or service, compliance with contract requirements, accuracy of reports and technical excellence.
- Timeliness of performance and reliability.
- Cost control, remaining within budget, current accurate and complete billing, relationship of negotiated costs to actuals and being cost effective.
- Satisfaction of customer end users with the contractor's service.
- Business relations, management, and effective subcontracting program, reasonable and effective contractor-recommended solutions.

Assessment of the Offeror's past performance will be one means of evaluating the credibility of the Offeror's proposal, and relative capability to meet performance requirements.

Information will also be considered regarding and significant subcontractors.

Evaluation of past performance will include a determination of the Offeror's commitment to customer satisfaction and will include conclusions of informed judgment. The basis for the past performance rating will be documented.

During discussions Offeror's will be given an opportunity to address unfavorable reports of past performance, if the Offeror has not had a previous opportunity to review the rating. Recent contracts will be examined to ensure that corrective measures have been implemented. Prompt corrective action in isolated instances may not outweigh overall negative trends.

If an Offeror does not have a past performance history relating to this solicitation, the Offeror will not be evaluated favorably or unfavorably on this factor.

M.5 COST/PRICE

The cost/price proposal will be evaluated for magnitude and realism, but will not be numerically scored. To be considered acceptable under this solicitation, the Offeror must propose fixed prices for the items to be acquired.

M.6 FACILITIES

The Facility Proposal will be evaluated on a pass/fail basis on the site's ability to provide a detailed plan on the site's usage, a viable Information Technology infrastructure with respect to meeting all Government requirements in addition to: 24/7 access for government personnel, raise floor, amount of electrical power, cooling capacity, physical security, backup power, backup cooling, fire suppression system, the floor space required to operate the initial delivery of the HPCS and the ability to support upgrades and expansion.

A site visit by the Government may be required as part of, or in addition to, the Live Test Demonstration for inspection purposes. No inspection of the Facility will be required if the Offeror proposes to use all GFE.

In the event an unfavorable evaluation is received (a failing grade) on the Facility Proposal, the entire proposal is judged unacceptable.

M.7 EVALUATION FACTORS

All technical and Past Performance portions of proposals will be evaluated using the criteria listed in Table 1 below. Each Offeror will be assigned a Summary Rating for its Technical and Past Performance, determined through evaluation of its proposal.

Table 1. Evaluation Criteria

| ADJECTIVE RATING | DESCRIPTION |
|---------------------|--|
| Unacceptable | PROPOSED APPROACH HAS MANY DEFICIENCIES OR PROPOSED APPROACH IS TOTALLY WITHOUT MERIT. PAST PERFORMANCE UNACCEPTABLE. |
| Inadequate | PROPOSED APPROACH HAS ONE OR MORE DEFICIENCIES OR MAJOR WEAKNESSES, AND IS NOT CAPABLE OF IMPROVEMENT TO ACCEPTABLE OR BETTER WITHOUT ADOPTION OF A NEW APPROACH. PAST PERFORMANCE MORE NEGATIVE THAN ACCEPTABLE. |
| Marginal | PROPOSED APPROACH HAS DEFICIENCIES OR SIGNIFICANT WEAKNESSES, BUT IS CAPABLE OF IMPROVEMENT TO ACCEPTABLE OR BETTER WITHOUT ADOPTION OF NEW APPROACH. NO OR NEUTRAL PAST PERFORMANCE. |
| Acceptable | PROPOSED APPROACH FULLY MEETS THE REQUIREMENT WITH NO DEFICIENCY OR SIGNIFICANT WEAKNESS. PAST PERFORMANCE MORE POSITIVE THAN NEGATIVE. |

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| Good | <p>PROPOSED APPROACH FULLY MEETS REQUIREMENT AND HAS SOME SUPERIOR FEATURES WITH NO DEFICIENCY OR SIGNIFICANT WEAKNESS.</p> <p>PAST PERFORMANCE ACCEPTABLE IN ALL AREAS/SUPERIOR IN SEVERAL AREAS.</p> |
| Outstanding | <p>PROPOSED APPROACH FULLY MEETS REQUIREMENT AND IS SUPERIOR IN MANY FEATURES WITH NO DEFICIENCY OR WEAKNESS.</p> <p>PAST PERFORMANCE ACCEPTABLE IN ALL AREAS/SUPERIOR IN MOST AREAS.</p> |